BEDOUINS MJ4

In our days sedentarization is the product of the nomad's contact with settled society during the regular periods of his encampment on the outskirts of the cultivated land. 166X 177

At present, the tribal population of Syria, Iraq, Palestine (Israel) and Transjordan (Jordan) is in all stages of transition to a sedentary existence. A. S. Kirkbridge has outlined[1] the various stages that the Transjordan nomad passes on his journey to the settled life of an agriculturalist. With insignificant changes the description of the steps can be made applicable to the process of sedentarization as a whole. 166X 178

Stages of Sedentarization

1. The true desert Bedouin, raising mainly camels,[2] lives in a world where nature makes cultivation impossible. He migrates in accordance with the existence of water and grazing and supplements his meager income by raiding if conditions permit. He despises the villagers. 166X 221 434 361

2. In spite of the contempt that the Bedouin have for the settled peasants they come to realize that the fellah lives a more comfortable life and enjoys a better diet, compared to the standards of the nomad. 609 434

3. The next step is the occupation of cultivable land by the nomadic tribe. Agriculture is practiced only as a 166X 361 241

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1. Kirkbride, 1945, March-April
2. Kirkbride does not discuss the Bedouin that came from Arabia subsisting exclusively on camel-breeding. Since practically all Transjordanian nomads have crossed the first stage, the conversion of exclusive camel economy to mixed pastoral economy of sheep and camel-breeding.

178 [493] 622 It is not a rarity to see an automobile under the tent of the sheikh, even when he still wanders and camps with his tribe. Gradually the chiefs establish luxurious residences, equipped with all the comforts of modern living. At this stage the sheikh will spend most of the time away from the tribe, favoring the social, economic and political activities of the sedentary population.

177 622 178 An instructive example of the changes in the social status of the powerful sheikh is the case of the Rwala. The Rwala tribesmen still belong to the few remaining true Bedouin. Their former Sheikh, Emir Nuri al-Sha'lan, however, showed already before World War I his preference for a house to a tent. His grandson Fawaz, the present Emir of the tribe, was in his youth a genuine Bedouin, but later his mode of living became thoroughly westernized.[1)]

619 178 566 The tribesmen will not remain unaffected by this development. For a while they try tenaciously to preserve the nomadic mode of existence, but sooner or later they will become the exploited tenants and share-croppers on the estates of their leaders.

566 622 During the Mandatory regime the absentee landlords lost much of their grip on the cultivators, but the tenants of the tribal sheikhs are still in a virtual state of serfdom. In some cases the tribal chief still has complete authority over the

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1. Oppenheim, 1943, p. 108

BEDOUINS MJ4

Social transformation of the Bedouin

When the Bedouin settle down, they gradually adopt the fellah's mode of living. As their contact with village and city increases, they become familiar with modern implements, matches, oil-lamps, etc.

The Ghawarneh of Northern Palestine, for example, live like peasants engaged in intensive cultivation.[1] They grow rice, maize and peas. The women are occupied with mat weaving, the men join them in this work during the slack season in the fields. They still dress like Bedouin, and most of them live in huts. There are stone houses in which the family chiefs dwell.[2] After settlement, Bedouin customs and habits give way gradually to those of the fellahin.

In the Khisa-Finn refugee camp (southern Syria) there are Arab refugees who claim to be members of tribes that lived until recently in Upper Galilee, around Lake Tiberias, near Nazareth and Safed. In July 1949, an inquiry was conducted among the members of the camp concerning tribal habits and health conditions.[3] The members of the tribes were agricultural folk, some small traders and artisans. A part of them used to live permanently in stone houses, others dwelt in houses during the winter months, in tents during the harvesting season. In a number of tribes only the wealthy had houses, the poorer members lived permanently in tents. Most of the tribal people were settled, one group for only 50 to 70 years.

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1. This was the situation prior to the Arab-Israeli war of 1948.
2. Ashkenazi, 1938, p. 46
3. Cotrell, 1950

1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala
Bedouins MJ4

443 stallions from various Bedouin tribes in the Euphrates. Their kind is found everywhere in Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. Almost invariably the *Akhayl* hail from Anayza and Buraida, two large oasis-towns of Kasim in the heart of Arabia.

[437] During spring they travel among the nomad Arabs and barter rice, coffee, sugar, arms, munitions, and gold [493 for camels and colts. Bedouins have only begun to sell ●177] mares since the arrival of the automobile, which has displaced the horse for raiding purposes.

These traders travel unmolested throughout Arabia and they pay the *sheykh* of the tribe from which they purchase animals a small sum for the privilege of pursuing their business. Each trader has his own special tribe which he visits every year.

721 On the second day, when we came on some rain water left in the rocky hollows of a *wadi*, we decided to rest awhile and let our mares drink their fill. We had hardly dismounted when two strange Bedouins on horseback suddenly appeared. Ali jumped on his mare's back at once, and deserting me and our animals, galloped away in the opposite direction from which the Bedouins had come, obviously seeking cover.

"A *ghazu!*" he yelled, as he rode away.

The two strange Bedouins were armed. They were obviously not traders, as Ali had immediately perceived. More horsemen appeared and they began to fire at Ali and myself. My "Powerful" protector, ducking low over [291] his horse's neck, made a comical picture. The hostile Bedouins were Fid'an, as I knew from their striped shepherd's cloaks. To defend ourselves was useless, as we

1-[The Akhayl or camel and horse traders--Analyst]

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

contact with a much superior force of irregular Kurdish and Badawin cavalry who forced us to retire.

After conducting a steady retreat for a distance of some eighteen miles, we were about to skirt Barjisiyah wood, when our force was suddenly charged in flank by 'Ajaimi al Sa'adun and some thousand Muntafiq mounted men, who, unknown to us, were hiding in that particular wood.

As we were up to that point retiring on a very wide front in line of squadrons at two hundred yards' interval, each squadron covering the movement to the rear of its neighbour by dismounted fire action, our force was too widely extended to change front and present a suitable face to the flank charge, and for a time the direst confusion and chaos existed.

Fortunately for us, an infantry column had come out to assist our retreat, and was entrenched close by. It saved the situation. Otherwise, many of us would not be living to tell the tale, for to give 'Ajaimi and his men full credit, his charge was magnificent, and went right through our force, quite in accordance with the best tradition of cavalry tactics. As it was, our worsted force was driven right on to the friendly infantry trenches, and great was the Badawins' surprise to see themselves suddenly confronted at almost point-blank range by a long line of British bayonets comfortably ensconced in trenches. These turned what looked like a probable *débâcle* for us into a defeat for the enemy, and by their withering fire forced 'Ajaimi's men to beat a precipitate retreat, which was successfully turned into a headlong flight by accurate salvoes from a hidden battery.

Though the ordinary Badawin rides barebacked, the shaikhs and those who can afford it use for comfort a light cloth saddle, known as a *ma'araga*. This has no stirrups and is little more than a padded numdah strapped on to the horse's back.

The *ma'araga* is quite short from front to rear, just allowing a man sufficient room to seat himself.

MODERN WEAPONS, AND THE MOTOR CAR

As already mentioned, stallions or males are not wanted in Arabia, and are sold as soon as possible for draught or pack purposes in the

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

177 231 sea coast towns and in those countries still using *arabdnas* or horse-drawn carriages. The market for horses is I fear going to get much worse as motor transport develops in the Middle East. The demand for horses is already so restricted that the Badawin of the interior has now started the miserable practice of killing off his male foals at birth. I am told (1935) by various shaikhs of the interior that this practice has become almost universal. It no longer pays the average Badawin to keep a horse till it reaches three or four years of age, for if he is lucky enough to find a buyer then he will only get Rs.80 to Rs.90 for his animal. As I write in 1935 a second-class (average) Arab horse in the bazaars of Kuwait fetches only about Rs.40 (about £3). Fortunately, Arab horse-racing still flourishes in places like Bombay, Poona, Baghdad and Cairo, and this will for some years to come insure a steady market for the best class of Arab horses. This, however, will only preserve to the world a small percentage of the best animals, and will not save the second-class or average horse.

231 704 713 Apart from the woeful killing of males at birth, I had it on the authority of His Majesty King Bin Sa'ud himself in 1932, that Arab mares are also on the high road to extinction since the introduction of the small-bore magazine rifle as a war weapon among the tribes of inner Arabia. As he pithily put it, "In the olden days when tribe fought tribe with spear and sword, the mares, which were always ridden in battle, came to little harm, for man sought to kill his opponent man, not his steed. To-day the fighter, whilst still a thousand yards from his enemy, is greeted with a rain of well-aimed bullets which slays infinitely more animals than riders."

231 Bin Sa'ud also told me that he was fully alive to the danger of the Arab horse becoming extinct, and in order to remedy matters had started five stud farms in Sa'udi Arabia all under his royal patronage. He added that he meant to try hard to better the situation, but was not optimistic.

In 1935, as I write, it is most pleasing to see that the King is still pressing on with this good work, and any one going to Riyadh from Iraq and taking with him one or more good mares, is given a special welcome and receives a good price for his animals. More important still is the help the King affords to his own tribesmen, who happen to have fallen on bad times and cannot afford even to keep their mares

13: Thesiger T-3 (ca. 1949) 1950 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
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THE BADU OF SOUTHERN ARABIA

By W. P. THESIGER, D.S.O.

114 Lecture given on September 28, 1949, Lieut.-General Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart, V.C., K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., in the chair.

The CHAIRMAN: To-day Mr. Thesiger is going to talk to us about the countries around the Red Sea, with which he has been acquainted since childhood. He was born in Abyssinia. Before the recent war he was with the Sudan Civil Service. In 1940 he was sent to Abyssinia and volunteered for service there with the Ethiopian Patriot Force, in which he was awarded the D.S.O.

Later he was sent on special duty to Damascus and was able to resume his Arabic studies. Since the war he has carried out several remarkable trips to explore the heart of the area known as the "Empty Quarter," and he is now going to tell us about the most recent of these.

101 178 184 I AM going to talk about the Badu of Southern Arabia; that is to say, the camel-owning nomads who live in and around the Empty Quarter. I wish to make it clear that I am talking about the Badu, or Baduin, and not about Arabs who cultivate or live in towns, for there is all the difference in the world between them. I do not suppose that a sophisticated young town Arab would be flattered if you referred to him as a Badui, though it is surprising how many of them do proudly claim Badu origin, and I do know that no Badui would like to be called a townsman or cultivator. At first sight the Badu of Southern Arabia appear to be very different from those of the north, but I believe that this difference is largely superficial and due to the clothes which they wear. I do not think that either a Sa'ari from the deserts just north of the Hadhramaut or a Wahibi from South-Eastern Oman would feel himself much out of place in an encampment of the Rualla. On the other hand, I think that a townsman from Aden or Muscat would always be conspicuous in Damascus. I wish also to make it quite clear that I am describing conditions in Southern Arabia and not in Arabia as a whole. In the past Badu life was everywhere much the same, harder in some places and easier in others. The last quarter of a century has, however, seen the most revolutionary changes in the north. There Ibn Saud has imposed his iron will upon the tribes. He has subjected the nomad to the rule of the settled Arab, stamped out raiding, and taxed the Badui as well as the cultivator. The same process has been carried out in Trans-Jordan, in Syria, and in Iraq. It was largely the use of the motor-car which made it possible to bring the Badu under control, for that robbed them of their age-old inaccessibility. Previously they had only to retire into the desert to be safe from pursuit, but now they are at the mercy of a motorized patrol, unable to get away and with nowhere to hide.

● [177]

178 619 Cars have, however, not yet penetrated into the southern desert, and there the old life still goes on. I do not suppose, except that the Badu are now armed with rifles, that their way of life has greatly changed since the times of Abraham. In the south they are still dominant and even unchallenged. It is true that before they enter the valley of the Hadhramaut

13: Thesiger T-3 (ca. 1949) 1950 Mjl Saud: Arabia
Bedouin Mss

181 thoroughbreds. No race prizes lineage higher, yet they are the most
554 democratic people in the world and the most individualistic. Among
177 them there is real equality. To certain families, by virtue of their descent,
577 they accord certain privileges, but as a courtesy, not as a right, and Badu sheikhs command respect only as long as they merit it. The traditional Arab way of life, fast vanishing to-day in contact with the West, owed much to Badu concepts, for the villagers and townsmen of Arabia, who form by far the greater part of her population, live close to the desert and were profoundly affected by it until motor-cars and aeroplanes removed for ever the need for camel journeys. Most of them are, indeed, of Badu origin, for the desert tides have always stranded the weak and broken upon the fringes of the Sown. Everywhere the Arabs have, at all times, judged honour and chivalry and hospitality by the standards of the tribesmen. Their love of liberty, their freedom from prejudice of class and caste, and their enthusiasm for poetry have come to them from the desert.

157 It is impossible to assess the character of the Badu, for among no other
571 race have so many contradictory qualities been fused together. I myself
81 have witnessed their courage and self-reliance, their endurance and pride of race, and I remember their patience, generosity, and unselfishness. But often I have been exasperated by their avarice and wearied by their endless
[135] importunities. No Badu thinks it shame to beg, and usually he will look disparagingly at the gift which he has received and grumble, "Is this all
[137] that you are going to give me?" Grasping and avaricious, they will talk unceasingly of money and argue heatedly for days about a dollar, then they will slaughter a camel worth 150 dollars to feed a stranger. Loyal to each other, they are yet without regard for human life and will knife an unarmed herdsboy with a jest. Cheerful and easily amused, they are generally good-tempered, though passionate when roused and quick to resent an injury.

166 I have often wondered as I rode across the desert what the future, and even the immediate future, holds for my companions and their kinsmen. The discovery of oil on the Persian Gulf is going to affect them profoundly and make it impossible for them to continue in their old ways, even if they would. I think myself that the oilfields will empty the desert. This movement of tribes from the Yaman and the Hadhramaut towards the north and the north-east is a movement which has been going on for thousands of years. It probably started even before the great migration of the Qahtan tribes, when, overwhelmed by calamity in their homes round Marib, some of them pushed across the deserts and occupied Oman. In recent years tribes such as the Awamir, Ruashid, and Manahil have left their homelands in the steppes to the north-east of the Hadhramaut and moved out into the sands to escape from the incursions of more powerful
166 tribes pressing on them from the west. Having accustomed themselves to
177 life in the sands, they have penetrated ever further and further into the Empty Quarter. In the past twenty or thirty years as conditions have become more settled in the north, due to the extension of Ibn Saud's influence over the powerful Murra tribe, they have grazed their herds round the Liwa oasis and in the sands near the Trucial Coast. Now the money to be earned on the oilfields along the Gulf is drawing the Badu

13: Thesiger T-3 (ca. 1949) 1950 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
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in ever-increasing numbers from as far away as Najran and Dhaufar. They go there at present with the intention of collecting enough money to buy a camel or two, so that they can build up a new herd, or perhaps marry, when they return to their homelands, but I think that every year an increasing number will settle down more or less permanently round the oilfields.

In the desert the Badu need very little to keep themselves alive. Their herds provide them with milk, butter, and occasionally with meat, but they have certain requirements which they cannot supply for themselves. They need cloth and cooking pots, knives, ammunition, an occasional load of dates or grain, and such simple luxuries as a handful of coffee or a little tobacco. To get these things they visit the villages or towns and sell a goat, a little butter, water skins, rugs, and ropes. Life in the desert ceases, however, to be physically possible if the few but entirely essential commodities that the desert Arab has hitherto been able to buy in exchange for the products of the desert become too expensive for him to afford, but the rise in the standard of living along the Persian Gulf is bound to send up the price of food and clothing, and the slightest rise is now fatal to the desert economy. For the Badu have already lost several important resources. In the past, desert transport was in their hands, but now lorries have largely replaced camels. There was also a constant demand in the towns and villages for good riding camels, which were hired by the nomads, and sheikhs would pay big prices for the best breeds. Now most of the villagers and townsmen drive about in cars. Two years ago, when I and my companions rode from Sulayil to Laila along the motor road, the villagers asked us why we did not go in cars "like the Muslamin." A Badui often loses all or nearly all his animals from disease, but where the tribes are still unadministered he can borrow a mount and join a raiding party and perhaps repair his fortunes. In unadministered areas they can also levy a certain amount of blackmail off the villagers, and the village sheikhs are prepared to keep on good terms with the tribes by giving them presents and much hospitality. Badu, however, meet with little sympathy from modern and progressive Arab administrators, who regard them as representing an outlook and way of life which they are anxious to abolish.

The Badu love money; even to handle it seems to give them a thrill, and I have often thought that when they are talking in their sleep they must be counting piles of dollars. Yet I have never had a single dollar stolen on my journeys, though my money has always been carried in unsealed bags distributed at random among the saddle-bags of my companions. The Badu are always obsessed with tales of buried treasure. There is *dhahab* (gold) to be found here and *dhahab* to be found there, under sand dunes, rocks, or even in the middle of quicksands. So naturally the oilfields draw them like a magnet from all over Arabia, and, once there, they find that they can get money for sitting in the shade and guarding something, or for doing work which is certainly easier than watering thirsty camels on a nearly dry well in the middle of summer. There is plenty of good food, abundant sweet water, and long hours for sleep. They have seldom had these things before, and now they are being

paid into the bargain. Family ties and a certain restlessness draw some of them back into the desert, but, as I have said, desert life is becoming more and more difficult and may soon become altogether impossible.

The hardy Badu tribesmen, the best stock in Arabia, may become, as a result of circumstances outside their control, a parasitic proletariat squatting in the fly-blown squalor of shanty towns on the outskirts of the oilfields in some of the most barren and inhospitable country in the world. I do not wish to suggest that the oil companies will not take adequate care of their workers and provide them with the best possible accommodation. Many of the Badu will certainly find employment with these companies; many of them have already shown considerable aptitude as drivers and mechanics, but it is uncertain whether as a race they are capable of the sustained effort required on an oilfield. At any rate, there will be great numbers who are unadaptable, inept, or physically incapable of finding work, and there will be the women and the children. Stranded in these salt-impregnated wastes, which can produce nothing but oil, and deprived of their old mobility, they may be unable to adjust themselves almost overnight to these new conditions and so become demoralized. Tribesmen who have never seen a car or an aeroplane or even a European will find themselves suddenly working with Englishmen and Americans who have met their first Arab ten days before. Lads who have never seen an unveiled woman are going to come in contact with European women, not only unveiled, but, in their eyes, undressed. At first they will think our dress indecent, many of our customs revolting, and our lack of religion appalling. The virtues of the desert nomads are, however, enforced by their circumstances, not by a natural preference for the ascetic way of life. In their own surroundings they are forced to be continent and self-restrained, but by nature they are self-indulgent and indolent. Their nomadic way of life, their tribal loyalties, their old interests, and the conventions which have governed their lives, will soon be swept away. Bored and disillusioned, they will, I fear, fall an easy prey to the vices and diseases of town life. They have always regarded themselves as the aristocracy of Arabia. They have taken a pride in surviving when others would succumb, and it is this pride in his manhood which the nomad expresses when he boasts, "I am a Badui." In the future they may easily drop to the bottom of the social scale, below those whom they know to be their inferiors in every way but that of adaptation to urban conditions.

A problem which confronts the rulers of Arabia is how to avoid pauperizing the nomads who will inevitably drift to the oilfields in ever-increasing numbers, and whose birth-rate is likely to rise considerably once they have settled there. It will indeed be tragic if they become the slum-dwellers of an industrialized Arabia. Poverty has been their constant lot, but it was a poverty shared by all. Now they will see Europeans and Arabs living in luxury in air-conditioned houses and provided with all the amenities of modern life. They will see wealth beyond their wildest dreams poured into the hands of a few; the Sheikh of Qatar, for instance, who until recently was the ruler of a few impoverished fishing villages and whose father sold headcloths in the market-place for a living, is now receiving royalties from an oilfield which may be one of the richest in the world.

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world. In the past, Arab rulers were always accessible to their subjects, and the most destitute Badui was accustomed to enter the audience chamber of an all-powerful king and address him by name, scorning the use of titles. Now these rulers may be tempted to seclude themselves in offices and to interpose a convenient façade of secretaries between themselves and the importunities of the needy and the oppressed. It is significant of the changes which are taking place that customary banquets are already being replaced by meals at which delicacies brought specially from America by air are served in European fashion.

Freedom is the birthright of the nomad. If he should be dispossessed, disillusioned, and yet remain as poverty-stricken as he was before, he might readily be induced to believe that Communism offered him a society similar to that which he had lost.

Brigadier S. H. Longrigg: Are the Badu of Southern Arabia—similar to those of Northern Arabia—nomadic within limits? Has each tribal group its well-understood limits of migration in terms of movement and duration, or can they go anywhere?

Mr. P. W. Thesiger: That depends to a large extent on the various tribes. The northern tribes are usually very limited in migration: they graze their camels on the salt bushes, which do not die during drought, but they have then to water the camels two or three times a day, and therefore do not move any great distance. The more nomadic tribes, however, will range over one hundred miles questing for the type of desert pasture which springs up here and there after rain. The extent of their migrations often depends on whether there is peace or war between them and their neighbours. If peace prevails they can go into their next-door neighbour's territory; if they are at war they are limited in their movements. Sometimes there is good grazing in the middle of the desert, but no tribe can go there because there happens to be a war between two of the tribes.

One of the tribes I saw on my last journey, the Wahba (one of the biggest of the desert tribes), are very restricted and remain always within their own particular area. Certain of the tribes may range further than others. The widest ranging tribes are probably those living on the sands, whereas those who live on the steppes and round the mountains are much more restricted in their migrations.

The Chairman said: On your behalf I wish to thank Mr. Thesiger for what he has told us. Since he has said that he can stay with us for three months and with the Badu for nine, there is little more than I can add. (Laughter.) I feel sure, however, that Mr. Thesiger is absolutely right in that. I can only hope, Mr. Thesiger, that when you go back to Southern Arabia you will enjoy your sojourn there as much as you did on your recent visit, and that when you return to England you will stay a little more than three months with us.